

**Statement of Edward M. Bolen  
President  
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**Before the Subcommittee on Aviation  
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives**

**Hearing on Opening Reagan National Airport to General Aviation  
March 16, 2004**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member DeFazio, and members of the Subcommittee, my name is Edward M. Bolen and I am President of the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA). GAMA represents over 50 of the world's leading manufacturers of general aviation airplanes, engines, avionics and component parts.

**Two Responses to September 11<sup>th</sup>**

The government's response to the September 11, 2001 attacks on America was to immediately ground all non-military airplanes. It was not a sophisticated approach to securing our nation's airways but it was effective. And given the circumstances, it was appropriate.

However, even before the last airplane landed it was clear that simply keeping the airplanes on the ground was not a reasonable security solution. Air transportation was simply too fundamental to our way of life, our values, and our economy for terrorists to be allowed to destroy it. As a country, we understood intuitively the need for a more sophisticated approach to security than grounding airplanes and closing airports.

Within two days of the 9-11 attacks commercial airline service was being restored everywhere except Reagan National Airport. But even Reagan, with its unique location and security sensitivity, would open for airline service less than three weeks later.

The federal government's determination to find workable security solutions was the key to the prompt restoration of commercial service. Some of the first security solutions implemented, such as the elimination of curbside

baggage check-in, were rudimentary. But everyone understood that it was important to get the planes flying and that more appropriate security solutions would evolve over time.

Airline security has indeed evolved from the early days following the terrorist attacks. That evolution is evident today with development of the CAPPS II project and the Registered Traveler Program. All of the evidence to date shows the federal government is truly committed to finding ever more effective ways of meeting the dual goals of enhancing commercial airline security AND facilitating commercial air travel.

Unfortunately, that same level of federal commitment cannot be found when it comes to general aviation operations near our nation's capital. For this part of our nation's transportation system, the federal government still views closed airports and grounded airplanes as an acceptable security measure.

How else could one explain the fact that it took the federal government less than three weeks to develop security procedures for reopening Reagan to commercial airlines but has gone nearly three years without developing equivalent procedures for general aviation?

Mr. Chairman, the fact is that our nation's security organizations have not failed to find a workable solution that will bring general aviation back to Reagan -- it is that they have failed to even try.

Surely, if the federal government can find a way to allow thousands of airline passengers to securely fly into and out of Reagan, it can find a way to let a Congressional Medal of Honor winner fly his own airplane into Reagan. Surely it can find a way for a company working with the Department of Defense on our nation's most classified programs to fly its own plane into Reagan to visit the Pentagon.

### **Spring 2002 Failed Takeoff**

Two years ago, we thought we had a solution for general aviation at Reagan. We were working with the Department of Transportation in the spring of 2002 to develop appropriate procedures and were told that the airport would reopen by June 1.

These procedures were based on sound operating and security principles. They included:

- The vetting and certification of flight deck crewmembers;
- Advance clearance of passenger manifests by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA);
- Screening of passengers and accessible property;
- Securing and physical inspection of aircraft, and;
- Compliance with Reagan National Airport Air Traffic Control special flight procedures.

After a public commitment to open the airport by June 1, we were told the date had slipped to July 1. Then we were told Labor Day. Obviously, the airport still has not reopened.

### **General Aviation Security Today**

In the meantime, general aviation has been doing all it can to promote the security of our industry. As you know, both industry and the federal government have taken numerous actions related to aviation security. Some of these actions include:

**Advanced Screening of Pilot Databases.** Regulations adopted by the FAA and the TSA on January 24, 2003, permit the immediate suspension, revocation or refusal to issue an airmen certificate to anyone that the TSA has determined poses a threat to transportation security. This is based on TSA information as well as that provided by other security agencies.

**Requirement to Carry Photo ID.** An FAA requirement, adopted in October 2002 at the request of industry, requires a pilot to carry government-issued photo identification along with their pilot certificate when operating an aircraft.

**Background Checks for Flight Training.** A federal requirement mandates that the U.S. Department of Justice conduct a comprehensive background check for all non-U.S. citizens seeking flight training in aircraft weighing more than 12,500 pounds. Legislation moving these background checks to the TSA and expanding this requirement to include notification to the federal government of all foreign nationals seeking pilot training regardless of

aircraft weight was adopted in the final version of *Vision 100 – the Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act*.

**The “Twelve-Five” and Private Charter Security Rules.** These security programs were established on April 1, 2003 as new requirements for non-scheduled commercial operators. They require stringent security procedures for our nation’s largest GA aircraft being used in charter operations.

**Nationwide Airport Watch Program.** In December 2002, the TSA, in conjunction with the Airport Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), implemented an Airport Watch program, including a hotline (1-866-GA-SECURE), which is operated 24/7 by the National Response Center. The program, which is managed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, allows anyone to report suspicious aviation activity to a trained and capable central command structure.

**Foreign Registered Aircraft Entering the US.** Before they are allowed to enter the United States, foreign registered general aviation aircraft must provide a complete passenger manifest and be approved by the TSA.

**Suspicious Aircraft Sales and Financial Transactions.** GAMA, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of the Treasury, developed guidelines and procedures that manufacturers and other aircraft sellers can use today to help detect attempted money laundering, confirm the identity of aircraft purchasers, and report suspicious financial transactions.

**The TSA Access Certificate Program.** In cooperation with the National Business Aviation Association (NBAA), TSA has developed and tested a security protocol for general aviation operators based at three airports: Teterboro and Morristown airports in New Jersey and White Plains airport in New York. Once an aircraft operator and crewmembers have completed appropriate training, adopted new security procedures, and met the other requirements of the program, they can apply for a TSA Access Certificate (TSAAC). Once issued, the TSAAC allows operators to operate internationally without each flight getting individual security approval, as is currently needed when entering US airspace from most foreign countries. The TSA is considering expanding the TSAAC nationwide and allowing TSAAC holders to fly through areas with temporary flight restrictions (TFRs), just as airlines do.

## **Why is it Important for Reagan to Reopen to General Aviation?**

First, it is important for symbolic reasons. Terrorists should not be allowed to succeed in closing the airport. When President Bush spoke about reopening Reagan to commercial aviation, he said “by opening this airport, we’re making yet another statement to the terrorists: You can’t win.” I believe that as long as general aviation is denied access to Reagan, the terrorists have won.

Second, the ban on general aviation creates in the public’s mind the erroneous impression that general aviation is somehow inherently dangerous. Some cities and even private companies have requested bans on general aviation overflights even though the TSA indicated it had no specific threat that justified a ban. The continued closure of Reagan to general aviation simply feeds the public campaign some groups have made against the entire general aviation industry.

Third, general aviation is the foundation of our nation’s air transportation system, not some separate and disconnected segment whose long-term health has no bearing on the rest of the industry. Today, nearly 70 percent of the nation’s commercial airline pilots start their career and training in general aviation. General aviation airports help ease congestion at hub airports, provide the only means of access to the nation’s air transportation system for many small communities, bringing them one of the keys to economic development. We should nurture general aviation and recognize it as an important national resource, not abandon and neglect it.

In asking for the reopening of Reagan to general aviation, we certainly agree that it is a unique airport. Commercial airlines are required to do things at Reagan they are not required to do anywhere else. That is the way it should be. Reagan is not like Teterboro, NJ, Midway in downtown Chicago, or any other airport in the United States. The security requirements necessary to open Reagan to general aviation do not need to be replicated anywhere else in the nation. But they must be implemented at Reagan.

## **The Proliferation of TFRs**

Mr. Chairman, as concerned as we are about restoring access to Reagan, we are equally as concerned about the proliferation of TFRs. TFRs are often developed at the last minute with dubious justification. If they continue to

proliferate, TFRs could be the single largest long-term constraint to air commerce ever imposed on our air transportation system.

All commercial airlines fly through TFRs—not just those meeting the additional requirements for access to Reagan. Surely we can find a way for properly qualified general aviation pilots, such as those holding a TSAAC, to also fly through TFRs. Our nation's security apparatus must tell us what needs to be done to allow general aviation access to TFRs. We are prepared to institute security procedures to mitigate any of their concerns.

But like the issue of access to Reagan, some parts of the security apparatus refuse to tell us their concerns. We are often unsure what part of the security apparatus is concerned. Until they do so, we are stuck with the status quo and no future resolution of the TFR issue. The general aviation community and some parts of the security apparatus continue to develop, implement and refine appropriate security procedures. But we can only go so far while an unidentified part of the security apparatus, which seems to have the final veto, is not at the table and refuses to even talk.

### **What We Need Today**

Mr. Chairman, it is time for the federal government to advance in its treatment of general aviation security. Continuing to ban general aviation from certain airports and airspace nearly three years after the attacks is unacceptable.

General aviation, including business aviation, is ready to institute specific and unique security procedures needed to again fly into Reagan. Currently, federal security and intelligence agencies simply will not tell us what is needed. This is unacceptable. Security organizations must tell us what is needed to access Reagan, and then work with industry to develop procedures that meet their security requirements.

We need your help in securing the political will to make this a reality. We need the federal government to commit to the dual goals of enhancing general aviation security AND facilitating general aviation operations. There is no reason this can't be accomplished.

## **Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for not only holding this hearing, but also for holding this hearing at the very location most devastated by the failure to find a workable solution to general aviation security and access. We need the leadership of this subcommittee to ensure that the federal government fulfills its security responsibilities thoughtfully, objectively and in a manner that values the freedoms that have made the United States the country it is today.